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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1498
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RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 0622
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0402
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 0071
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0107
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0396
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC
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SUBJECT: ARUNACHAL PRADESH: VETERAN CHIEF MINISTER OUSTED IN
INTRA-PARTY POLITICKING

¶1. (U) Summary: On April 9, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Gegong Apang was replaced by his Power Minister Dorjee Khandu. Dissident legislators in the state Congress Party compelled the Congress Party national leadership, already unhappy with Apang's rule, to effect the change. The shuffle may be temporary, as the politically savvy Apang is likely to try and win back his position. A bio of Dorjee Khandu is attached in paragraph 5. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On April 9, Arunachal Pradesh's Power Minister Dorjee Khandu was sworn in as Chief Minister after Gegong Apang formally stepped down from the post in the presence of the Congress Party's Northeast in-charge Oscar Fernandes and Union Information and Broadcasting Minister P.R. Das Munshi. This ended a 10-day political crisis, caused by complaints from ruling state Congress legislators. Apang, due to his autocratic style of governance, lost the confidence of his legislators and 29 of 33 Congress representatives in the 60-member Assembly lobbied Congress Party leadership in Delhi for a change and pushed for Khandu to be appointed Chief Minister. The Congress Party dissidents claimed to have the support of two Nationalist Congress Party legislators, one legislator from the regional party Arunachal Congress and 11 Independents, and threatened to defect from the Congress Party en masse if their demand was not met.

¶3. (SBU) Apang, who has headed the state government off and on for 23 years under different political party banners, had become Chief Minister for the fifth time in October 2004. Khandu's supporters alleged that Apang's rule was autocratic, that he seldom consulted them on government decisions, and that they were disillusioned over Apang's distribution of cabinet portfolios. Moreover, Congress leadership in Delhi was unhappy with Apang's individual deal-making in defiance of their wishes. He awarded two hydroelectric power projects to private developers Reliance Energy and Jai Prakash Associates after the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation had spent 100 crore rupees (about USD 10 million) preparing detailed project reports. Apang had also been an obstacle in the creation of the Northeast Water Resources Authority, a pet project of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: Khandu does not have the political stature of Apang and may not be supported by all of Arunachal Pradesh's 25 tribes, and his rule may be short-lived. Apang, a savvy

politician, has a track record of engineering political situations and is not averse to switching political loyalties. He may try to stage a comeback in the near future. End comment.

15. (SBU) Biography of Chief Minister Dorjee Khandu: Dorjee Khandu was born on March 19, 1955. A Buddhist from Tawang district, he served in Indian army intelligence for several years and was awarded a medal for meritorious service during India's 1971 Bangladesh War. Khandu participated in district politics for a decade until he was elected to the state Assembly for the first time in 1990. He was Power Minister under Apang and Mines and Minerals Minister in the earlier Congress government headed by Mukut Mithi.

JARDINE